

# ABSOLUTE USE OF ΠΙΣΤΙΣ AND ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ IN PAUL

Shuji Ota

## I

The limited focus of this article will concern the absolute use, without any qualification, of the word πίστις in the letters of Paul. With the recent resurgence of the πίστις Χριστοῦ debate, many scholars have argued the case for an objective interpretation ("faith in Christ"), or a subjective reading ("faith[fulness] of Christ"), or for both connotations. During the last fifteen years or so, the subjective reading of the phrase has gained a stronger foothold than the case previously was.<sup>1</sup> Within the debate, however, one important

<sup>1</sup> Without attempting to be comprehensive, I have noted the following scholars who have spoken for or against this debate since 1980: Sam K. Williams, "The 'Righteousness of God' in Romans," *JBL* 99 (1980) 241-90; A. J. Hultgren, "The Pistis Christou Formulation in Paul," *NovT* 22 (1980) 248-63; L. T. Johnson, "Romans 3:21-26 and the Faith of Jesus," *CBQ* 44 (1982) 77-90; R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ* (SBLDS 56; Chico, CA: Scholars, 1983); S. K. Williams, "Again Pistis Christou," *CBQ* 49 (1987) 431-47; L. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1987) 103, 113, 117; L. Keck, "Jesus' in Romans," *JBL* 108 (1989) 443-60, 452-7; S. K. Williams, "The Hearing of Faith: ΑΚΟΗ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ in Galatians 3," *NTS* 35 (1989) 82-93; M. D. Hooker, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ," *NTS* 35 (1989) 321-42; R. N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC 41; Dallas/Texas: Word Books, 1990) 87-8; G. N. Davies, *Faith and Obedience in Romans* (JSNTS 39; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990) 107-12; R. B. Hays, "Pistis and Pauline Christology: What is at stake?", and J. D. G. Dunn, "Once more, Pistis Christou," both in *SBL 1991 Seminar Papers* 30 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) 714-44; D. A. Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3.21-26* (JSNTS 65; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992); *Idem*, "The Meaning of ΠΙΣΤΙΣ and ΝΟΜΟΣ

piece of evidence still continues to be overlooked or undervalued: the peculiarly illuminating use of πίστις in Galatians 3:23 and 3:25. This theme was taken up by David M. Hay in 1989 in connection with the use of the term πίστις in the works of Philo and Josephus. Hay suggested that in Gal 3:23-25 πίστις means "the objective ground of faith." "Jesus is the decisive evidence or pledge given humankind by God which makes faith possible."<sup>2</sup> In the debate thereafter, however, there has been no discussion to come into dialogue with his thesis in relation to the nature of the genitive case in question. My proposal is that the polymorphous structure of Pauline πίστις, which is to be elucidated from the absolute use of the word in Galatians against the background information confirmed by Hay, should contribute essentially to the exegesis and rendering of the controversial πίστις Χριστοῦ formulation.

## II

According to Hay, there is a significant tendency in ancient Greek literature, including Jewish and Christian writings from the period of

in Paul: A Linguistic and Structural Perspective," *JBL* 111 (1992) 91-103; B. W. Longenecker, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ in Romans 3.25: Neglected Evidence for the 'Faithfulness of Christ'?", *NTS* 39 (1993) 478-80; D. A. Campbell, "Romans 1:17—A Crux Interpretum for the ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ debate," *JBL* 113 (1994) 265-85; R. A. Harrisville III, "ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ: Witness of the Fathers," *NovT* 36, 3 (1994); B. Dodd, "Romans 1:17—A Crux Interpretum for the ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ debate?", *JBL* 114 (1995) 470-73. To this list may be added three articles of my own written in Japanese: "πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ — Consideration Based on Survey of Uses of πίστις and πιστεύειν in LXX, OT Pseudepigrapha, and Philo," *Seishogaku Ronshu* (Biblical Interpretations) 26 (1993) 132-63; "Pistis of Jesus Christ in Galatians," *Nihon-no-Seishogaku* (Biblical Studies in Japan) 1 (1995) 123-46; and "Structure of Pauline Pistis," *Shinyakugaku Kenkyu* (New Testament Studies) 24 (1996) 1-12.

<sup>2</sup> "Pistis as 'Ground for Faith' in Hellenized Judaism and Paul," *JBL* 108/3 (1989) 461-76.

Christian origins, to use πίστις with the meaning of "'pledge' or 'evidence' on which subjective confidence or belief may be based."<sup>3</sup> He pays particular attention to the use of the term in Philo and Josephus and points out that almost sixty percent (93 out of 156 cases) of all Philo's uses of πίστις give it the sense of "objective ground for subjective faith," while forty percent (78 out of 195 cases) of all Josephus' uses may be described as giving the term the sense "objective evidence on which faith may be based."<sup>4</sup> Thus, "the meaning 'objective basis for faith' (evidence or pledge) for *pistis* is well attested in the hellenized Jewish literature of Paul's day, and it seems likely that the apostle sometimes used the word with that sense."<sup>5</sup>

Hay then applies this information to the interpretation of Pauline texts, especially Gal 3:23 and 25. He proposes that ἡ πίστις there means "the objective ground of faith," maintaining that "Paul shows that belief and trust have their sufficient foundation in God's action in Jesus." "The main point of the uses of πίστις in Gal 3:23 and 25 is that the possibility of faith arose with the coming of Jesus".<sup>6</sup> At the same time, he renders ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν in Gal 3:24 "so that we might be justified on the basis of the ground for faith [given in Jesus]," and three of the controversial πίστις Χριστοῦ phrases in like manner: ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ in Gal 2:20, "I live by the ground for faith which is the Son of God"; ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in Gal 3:22, "the promise that depends on the ground for faith that is Jesus Christ" (appositive genitive); and λαστήριον διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι in Rom 3:25, "as an expiation through the ground for faith (*pistis*) in his blood."<sup>7</sup>

Hay's observation that the meaning of "pledge" or "evidence" for πίστις was well established in pagan and Jewish Greek writings of Paul's day is

certainly convincing.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, it is reasonable to anticipate with him that "some early Christian writers would have found that sense of the term attractive." It is also appropriate to say that Paul's passage to be most illuminated by his interpretation of πίστις is Gal 3:23-25, since "it bears a primarily objective sense" and it can "be virtually equated with Jesus or the kerygma about him."<sup>9</sup> One encounters difficulties, however, when applying this line of interpretation *indiscriminately* to other texts of the apostle, including those passages which are gathering momentum in recent πίστις Χριστοῦ debates (Rom 3:22, 26; Gal 2:16, 16, 2:20, 3:22, Phil 3:9), three of which are taken up in his essay. Any exegetic effort concerning these essential passages should take into account not only general information but also specific issues involved: points repeatedly discussed in debates during the last twenty years. For instance, Paul appears to be citing an early Christian formula in Rom 3:24-26. Despite the ambiguity as to where the formula begins and ends, it is well accepted that Rom 3:25a is a part of this tradition. Hay's argument takes no account of this point, however.

Moreover, if we agree with Hay that ἡ πίστις in Gal 3:23-25 is "the objective ground of faith," we would create a theologically unnecessary and even unacceptable gap between the "ground" itself and our "faith." According to this argument, "faith" can be logically independent of the ground. If Jesus is merely the "evidence or pledge given humankind by God which makes faith possible" (*italics added*).<sup>10</sup> then there may possibly be religious persons who can have faith in God/Christ or kerygma without any such evidence or pledge. Being the evidence or pledge does not necessarily lead to the result that without it no "faith" whatsoever is possible, however "decisive" it may be. In Gal 3:23 Paul says, "Now before πίστις came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until πίστις would be revealed." With the expression "πίστις

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 461.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 463-70.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 475.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 471, 472, 475.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 475, 472.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 470. Rather limited, my own survey has also given similar results. See "πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ" (Note 1).

<sup>9</sup> Hay, *op.cit.*, 470.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 471.

came" Paul certainly refers to the concurrent appearance of Jesus and human faith. This πίστις contains more than the idea of Jesus being the "proof or ground for confidence," since it involves both Jesus and the faith of humanity. In other words, this πίστις is a word that refers to Jesus and believers' faith at the same time without any logical estrangement between the two.

In itself, Hay's observation that the primarily objective sense of πίστις in Gal 3:23-25 is illuminated by the "pledge/evidence" interpretation of the word is certainly to the point. I find it quite appropriate to maintain that the "background" for Paul's language here (and elsewhere) lies in the "widespread contemporary use" of πίστις to mean "pledge" or "evidence." Questionable to me is his procedure to shift from this background information directly to the exegesis—— exegesis which should not only pertain to this particular unit but also to other controversial texts. To explicate the meaning of πίστις in Gal 3:23 and 25, it is essential to investigate into the uses of the word throughout Galatians and other relevant texts of the Pauline epistles. We may begin our investigation by noting each and every use of πίστις in Galatians.

### III

In Galatians, the term πίστις is used 22 times in total. It occurs first in 1:23: μόνον δὲ ἀκούοντες ἤραν ὅτι ὁ διώκων ἡμᾶς ποτε νῦν εὐαγγελίζεται τὴν πίστιν ἣν ποτε ἐπόρθει. It is generally accepted that this verse is Paul's reproduction of a rumor which had been spreading over "the churches of Judea that are in Christ" (1:22) and the term πίστις, too, might have derived from it. Apparently, "the churches" here had some relationship with Paul's opponents who forced circumcision upon Galatians. As is widely admitted, this πίστις does not mean any attitude or act of individual believers but Christianity as a "superindividual total phenomenon" (*überindividuelles Gesamtphänomen*) spreading over the world.<sup>11</sup> However, we should take it as a way of saying the

Christians applied to themselves rather than an objective designation of the Christian religion which had been separating from Judaism. They used the word πίστις to identify themselves.

This use of πίστις is often construed as exceptional in Paul's vocabulary, but such a view is acceptable only after the "normal" use of πίστις in Paul's letters has been determined. We have just started and should obliterate any preconception. In Galatians 1:23, Paul is using this concept of πίστις affirmatively without any correction, and a thought similar to this also appears in 3:23, 25, and 6:10.<sup>12</sup> The ἀκοή πίστεως in 3:2, and 5, too, may belong to this category (see below). It appears that the term reflects an understanding common to Paul's opponents, Galatian believers, and Paul himself, and it would have been certainly advantageous for him, engaged in a

---

interpreting Pauline πίστις as a more or less "superindividual phenomenon." This line of understanding should be clearly demarcated from that of Schlatter, Bultmann, and their followers. Champions and sympathizers of such views include: E. Lohmeyer (*Grundlagen paulinischer Theologie*, Tübingen 1929, rep. 1966); F. Neugebauer (*In Christus*, Göttingen 1961); P. Stuhlmacher; H. Binder (*Der Glaube bei Paulus*, Berlin 1968); W. Schenk ("Die Gerechtigkeit Gottes und der Glaube Christi," *TLZ* 97 (1972), 161-74); G. Friedrich ("Glaube und Verkündigung bei Paulus," in: *Glaube im Neuen Testament. FS H. Binder*, Neukirchener-Verlag 1982, 93-113); and A. von Dobbeler (*Glaube als Teilhabe*, Tübingen 1987). Lohmeyer, for instance, interpreted Pauline πίστις as a dual reality consisting of faith as a "religiös-metaphysische Prinzip" and faith as an "Act des geschichtlich und naturhaft bestimmten Ichs" (S. 116ff.). Faith as "Prinzip" is the "Macht" which makes possible the existence and acts of each believer, and the latter is the "Schauplatz" where this Macht works. Strictly speaking, therefore, faith is a reality that cannot be expressed but "nicht ich glaube, sondern es glaubt in mir." Lohmeyer's thesis is certain to enlighten our exegesis of πίστις in Gal 3:23 and 25, although his interpretation of πίστις Χριστοῦ in Paul as his express reference to this principle ("Christus-Glaube") lacks linguistic and exegetical supports.

<sup>12</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, 41-2.

<sup>11</sup> P. Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965) 81. In German scholarship we note a marked tradition of

more or less juridical argument in this letter, to use this term at this point. Confirming the common understanding was indispensable for the aim and rhetoric of Paul who was about to refute the teachings of his opponents and persuade the Galatians of the propriety of his own teaching and qualifications. Thus, we should regard *πίστις* in this sense as belonging to Paul's own vocabulary, apart from the question of how it is characteristically Pauline. (The uses in 3:23 and 25, which relate *πίστις* to Christ explicitly and exclusively, seem to be more Pauline.)

Since the use of *πίστις* in 1:23 presupposes the existence of Christian believers, it is obvious that the attitude or act of the believer ("believing" or faith in a narrow sense) is included in its connotations. We should be careful, however, that it contains two more elements: *Christ* which the "believing" ("faith") is directed at or about and the *word of proclamation* which ties the believers to Christ. In the first place, note the parallelism of *εὐαγγελίζεται τὴν πίστιν* in this verse with *εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν (=αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ)* in 1:16. Thus, *πίστις* in 1:23 has participation in Christ as its essential element. This interpretation is supported by a comparison with 3:23 (*Πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἔλθειν τὴν πίστιν*) and 3:25 (*ἐλθοῦσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως*). In these verses, Paul uses the term *πίστις* almost interchangeably with "Christ" by juxtaposing the arrival of *πίστις* with that of Jesus Christ. In other words, Paul with this wording tried to indicate the "Christ-faith" explicitly and exclusively related to Christ, neither (nonspecific) general devoutness to the supreme being nor piety mediated by the Torah.

The other essential characteristic of the *πίστις* in 1:23 is that it is inseparably connected with the word of proclamation, as is indicated by the expression *εὐαγγελίζεται* ("proclaiming") here. Thus, this use of *πίστις* is understood as a *superindividual reality* marked by certain indices, created through the proclamation of the "gospel of Christ" (1:7) having more or less fixed contents, and directed essentially at/about Christ into a participationist relationship with him (Cf. 3:26ff.). Whereas *πίστις* is a Greek appellative to express general meanings with or without religious connotation, Paul used it as a *specific term* to have Christ's involvement as the essence, which may be

called "historical."

We can also perceive an implication of proclamation in the *πίστις* in 3:23 and 3:25. Although there is no element that suggests this concept in the immediate context, it was the very missionary purpose of Paul to proclaim *πίστις* or Christ with the word of proclamation (cf. 1:12, 16, Rom 10:14-17, 1 Cor 15:11, 14). The revelation of *πίστις* in 3:23 evidently corresponds to the revelation of "his Son" to (in?) Paul himself in 1:16. The revelation of the Son of God to Paul was not for himself but for the sake of realizing God's plan to "proclaim Christ among the Gentiles" and to bring the "blessing of Abraham" to those who are in Christ Jesus (3:14). The revelation of the Son of God to Paul and the proclamation of Christ by him belong to the same age from the salvation-historical point of view.<sup>13</sup>

The *πίστις* in 3:2 and 3:5, too, may be understood in the same way, in terms of its essential connection with Christ and the word of proclamation. Generally, the phrase *ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως* in these verses is interpreted in either one of four ways enabled by the combination of two possible meanings of *ἀκοή* ("the action/sense of hearing" or "that which is heard" [report/message]) and two possible meanings of *πίστις* ("the act of believing/trusting" [faith] or "that which is believed" [the gospel]): "by hearing with faith," "by hearing the gospel," "from the message that enables faith," and "from the gospel-message."<sup>14</sup> However, there is no reason to confine the meaning of this *πίστις* to "faith" or "message." That it involves Christ (his coming and role) is clearly seen in its connection with the preceding verse: "Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified" (3:1). Moreover, the emphasis of Paul's argument in the preceding section (2:15-21) is placed on the believed Christ rather than the believers. Thus, this use of *πίστις* is understood to mean a new reality coming from God as a superindividual total phenomenon which involves all these elements:

<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, *ἐκ ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* in Gal 1:12 should be taken as a subjective genitive to mean "by revelation from Jesus Christ," judging from syntactical similarity with 1:1. See Longenecker, *Galatians*, 23f.

<sup>14</sup> See Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 143ff.

believing people who have faith in Christ/God, believed Christ/God who is the object of their faith, and the word of proclamation that creates their relationship. In other words, Paul is here addressing his readers on the basis of their receipt of the Spirit while returning to the common understanding voiced in 1:23.

This reality of πίστις cannot be appropriately expressed by the traditional rendering of the term "faith." Hereinafter, πίστις in this sense will be called simply *pistis*, not as a transliteration but as a loan word whose full nuances cannot be covered by any single English word.<sup>15</sup> Thus, εὐαγγελίζεται τὴν πίστιν in 1:23 can be translated as "proclaiming the *pistis*"; ἐξ ἁκοῆς πίστεως in 3:2 and 3:5 "from the message of *pistis*"; Πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἔλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν in 3:23 "now before the *pistis* came"; ἐλθοῦσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως in 3:25 "but now that the *pistis* has come"; and πρὸς τοὺς οἰκίους τῆς πίστεως in 6:10 "for those of the household of *pistis*."

The exegesis of πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη in 5:6 is not so easy as it appears to be. While the widely accepted interpretation that it refers to individual Christians' "faith working through love" is of course possible, it could also be read as *pistis* as superindividual grace working through love which is the first on the list of "the fruit of the Spirit" (5:22). Πίστις in 5:22, on the other hand, doubtlessly means "faithfulness" as an ethical virtue.

#### IV

Even more important is the phrase ἐκ πίστεως in 3:24 which is sandwiched between 3:23 and 3:25. It is unnatural to think that this πίστις is used in a different sense from the same term occurring in the verses immediately before and after it. If so, ἐκ πίστεως here means "by *pistis*" rather than "by faith." The expression ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν (3:24) should be

<sup>15</sup> When translating *pistis* into Japanese, we have a convenient *kanji* 信 (*shin*). This polysemous word means first "being truthful and trustworthy," second "being confident or believing," and third "a letter or tidings."

translated: "so that we might be justified by *pistis*." By the same token, the occurrences of ἐκ πίστεως in 3:7, 8, 9, 11 (citation from Habakkuk), 12, and 5:5 and διὰ τῆς πίστεως in 3:14 and 26 can also be construed in like manner. That is, οἱ ἐκ πίστεως in 3:7 and 9 can be rendered "those who are of *pistis*," ὅτι ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῖ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεὸς in 3:8 "that God would justify the Gentiles by *pistis*," ὁ δὲ νόμος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ πίστεως in 3:12 "but the law is not of *pistis*," ἐκ πίστεως ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα in 5:5 "by *pistis*, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness," ἵνα τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος λάβωμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως in 3:14 "so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through *pistis*," and πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in 3:26 "for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through *pistis*."

Particularly noteworthy is the use of *pistis* in 3:11 where Paul cited from Habakkuk 2:4: Ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται. In context, this sentence is considered to mean "The one who is righteous will live by *pistis*."<sup>16</sup> The question as to what text Paul had at hand and how he used or altered it is not yet solved, but we need consider at least three points in relation to our problem.

First, as was proposed by C. H. Dodd, it is probable that Paul drew on a tradition which already recognized Habakkuk 2:4 as "a *testimonium* to the coming of Christ."<sup>17</sup> If this is the case, Paul's argument using a well-known OT passage would certainly be more effective with his Jewish-Christian antagonists. However, here is *no clear indication* that Paul understood or meant ὁ δίκαιος to be pointing to Christ. The phrase ἐκ πίστεως in v.11 must have the same meaning as the one in the following v. 12, yet it is obvious that πίστις in the latter is not limited to the faith of Christ. In my view, it refers to a superindividual (and collective-communal [see below]) *pistis* as eschatological reality. In other words, Paul is here comparing a whole (*pistis*)

<sup>16</sup> The phrase ἐκ πίστεως should be taken as modifying the verb ζήσεται. See Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 150f.

<sup>17</sup> C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Nisbet, 1952 [Fontana, 1965]), 51.

with another whole (the law, which is also collective-communal). If these remarks are appropriate, we will be allowed to consider the probability that Habakkuk 2:4 was already used in an extended manner as a biblical testimony to support the *self-understanding of early Christian churches* prior to Paul. In that case, the word πίστις would have been understood in a sense very similar to that in 1:23.

Second, if Paul quoted directly or personally from the Septuagint (ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως μου ζήσεται), it means that he himself omitted μου with a definite intention. What was that intention? Obviously, Paul's wording here is more ambiguous than both the Septuagint version and the Masoretic text: וְיִצְחָק בְּאֵמָנוֹתָיִךְ יִתְּנָה. Therefore, if Paul wanted to mean either the "faith of the believer" or the "faith of Christ",<sup>18</sup> he would have felt it necessary to say ἐκ πίστεως αὐτοῦ. Because it is equivalent to a literal translation of the Masoretic text, such an addition was not unreasonable or misleading. Paul was probably aware of the Hebrew version of Habakkuk.<sup>19</sup>

Third, turning back to the Pauline text, just as ἐκ πίστεως in Gal 3:7, 8, 9, and 24 is unanimously applied to the Christians (mainly Gentiles) contemporary with Paul, so the Habakkuk quotation in 3:11 is directed at the Christians of the same category, as its close connection with 3:12 indicates. (We should not introduce Paul's argument in Romans 4 easily.) If this is the case, it is difficult to interpret only this ἐκ πίστεως in a sense different from that of what occurs in 3:24.

<sup>18</sup> A. T. Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 39-45; Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ*, 151-57; D. A. Campbell, *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3.21-26*, 204-13; *idem*, "Romans 1:17—A Crux Interpretum for the ΜΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ debate," 281-84.

<sup>19</sup> J. D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC 38A, Dallas/Texas: Word Books, 1988), 44-46, 48-49.

## V

The contents of 1:23 quoted above and 1:13b (ὅτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ἐδίωκον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐπόρθουν αὐτήν) are clearly related with each other, as is shown by the fact that the verb διώκω (persecute) and πορθέω (destroy) are used in common. In 1:23 we read "the one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the *pistis* he once tried to destroy," and 1:13 portrays the "former" life of Paul as "violently persecuting the church of God and trying to destroy it." This parallelism suggests that the *pistis* has a *collective-communal* connotation. This point can be inferred from the expression "household (or family) of *pistis*" in 6:10.

Such a connotation is also recognizable in the verb πιστεύειν in 2:16b (καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν). Bultmann argued that the "primary sense of πιστεύειν" is "acceptance of the kerygma about Christ" and the expression πιστεύειν εἰς means "to be converted from (Jewish or) pagan belief to Chr. faith."<sup>20</sup> We should note, however, that conversion was not a simple turning of the mind or existential decision but implied being incorporated into a "household of *pistis*" called "church" by being baptized in front of other people. Uses of πιστεύειν similar to this apart from Galatians are found in Rom 13:11, 1 Cor 15:2 and 11, Phil 1:29, and 1 Thess 4:14, and also occur in Deutero-Pauline letters (Eph 1:13, 1 Tim 1:16). The frequent use of πιστεύειν in the Acts in sections narrating the conversion of Jews and the Gentiles probably suggests that this verb was used from early days as a conventional word to express converting to the Christian faith, being baptized publicly, and joining the church (4:4, 8:12-14, 9:42, 11:17, 21, 14:23, 17:11-12, 18:8, 19:2).

In addition, the present participle of πιστεύειν in Galatians 3:22 (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν) expresses one's condition of belonging to the community of *pistis* (Cf. Rom 4:24, 1 Cor 1:21, 1 Thess 2:13, Eph 1:19, Acts 22:19. See also 2 Thess 1:10, Tit 3:8, Heb 4:3, Acts 4:32, 19:18). οἱ πιστεύοντες and οἱ ἐκ πίστεως substantially have the same meaning. In Galatians 3:7 and 9 Paul used the

<sup>20</sup> Bultmann, "πιστεύω, πίστις, κτλ.," *TDNT* VI, 208, 204.

latter wording probably to relate it to Habakkuk 2:4. It is confirmed again from this fact that πιστεύειν is not a mere turning of the mind but refers to a way of living characterized by joining the community of *pistis* (church) and walking by *pistis* which makes possible and sustains the existence of the community itself.

From these observations (especially from that on *pistis* of 3:23, 25) emerges the view that the absolute use of πίστις or *pistis* in Paul refers to an *objective dispensation or system of salvation by God* comparable with the Torah of Judaism. Some supports of this view are found in Romans. Stating διὰ ποίου νόμου; τῶν ἔργων; οὐχί, ἀλλὰ διὰ νόμου πίστεως in 3:27, Paul continues λογιζόμεθα γὰρ δικαιοῦσθαι πίστει ἄνθρωπον χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου in v. 28. Whether the νόμος in v. 27 is used in a general sense meaning "law" or "principle" or specifically refers to the Jewish Torah is debated, but if Paul's absolute use of πίστις referring to a superindividual/collective-communal reality rather than individual faith of the believer is to be taken seriously, the balance of advantage will turn to the former view. While this view is supported by a larger number of scholars, a great difference will be made if this understanding of Pauline *pistis* is accepted. By νόμου πίστεως Paul is *not* referring to the inner attitude of believing individuals. He is *not* insisting that "faith" as an attitude of the believer is the "law" that makes him or her righteous. Here, too, Paul is comparing a *whole* with *another whole*. That is, just as in Galatians, these uses of πίστις point to *pistis* as a superindividual phenomenon: a collective-communal reality of God's grace that consists of (the faith of) believers, [the faithfulness (see below)] of believed Christ/God, and the word of proclamation that creates their relationship. By calling this *pistis* "nomos," Paul wanted to lead his readers to perceive that it is a new dispensation for salvation which surpasses and supersedes the Jewish Torah. Similar uses of *pistis* occur in Rom 4:16, 5:1-2, 9:30, 32, 10:6, 11:20, 1 Cor 16:13, 2 Cor 5:7, Phil 1:27, and 3:9 (see also Rom 8:2 [νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος], Gal 6:2 [τὸν νόμον τοῦ Χριστοῦ], and 1 Cor 9:21 [ἐννομος Χριστοῦ]), and are also found in Deutero-Pauline letters (Eph

4:5, 1 Tim 1:19, 2:7, 3:9, 4:1, 4:6, 6:21, Tit 1:4. Cf. Acts 6:7).<sup>21</sup>

In this connection, we should note an interesting problem posed by RSV's rendering of Rom 3:30b. It translates as follows:

and he (God) will justify the circumcised on the ground of *their* faith and the uncircumcised through *their* faith (italics added).

The original Greek sentence, however, has no element corresponding to "their" in this translation. It is essential to note that *nowhere* does Paul use a wording such as δικαιοῦσθαι ἐκ πίστεως αὐτοῦ or δικαιοῦσθαι διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ. When he discusses justification, he *always* says δικαιοῦσθαι ἐκ πίστεως or δικαιοῦσθαι διὰ τῆς πίστεως without any qualifier. The expression λογίζεται ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ εἰς δικαιοσύνην in Rom 4:5 (which is part of Paul's discussion of Abraham's justification) is quite exceptional and moreover it is not a construction with ἐκ or διὰ. On the other hand, when Paul refers to πίστις ὁμῶν or πίστις αὐτοῦ, he *never* discusses justification. This simple fact seldom attracts scholars' attention, but is essential for our understanding of Paul's teaching on justification. RSV overlooked or neglected the difference, equating δικαιοῦσθαι ἐκ πίστεως with δικαιοῦσθαι ἐκ πίστεως αὐτῶν. Although this particular translation was revised in NRSV, many Christian exegetes still seem to share the understanding exemplified by RSV.

This is not to say that every differentiation of this kind is by the addition of a modifier in the genitive case. When contextually obvious, Paul does not use any uneconomical modifier, as is seen in Rom 4:9, 11, 19, 20, 12:3, 6, 14:1, 22, and 2 Cor 8:7. Extending this observation to all the absolute uses of πίστις in Paul's letters, however, is a mistake. (Note again that in these passages Paul did not use πίστις in a prepositional phrase with ἐκ or διὰ.)

<sup>21</sup> In Rom 11:20 we see an interesting comparison of ἀπιστία of the Jews and πίστις of the Gentile Christians. This ἀπιστία denotes not only the collective faithlessness of the former but also their collective decision to reject *pistis*, the new dispensation of salvation given by God, by clinging to the old system (cf. 10:2-4, 18-21).

## VI

Given that Paul's absolute use of πίστις indicates a superindividual, collective-communal reality which works as a new dispensation for salvation, how should we understand the genitive case used in the πίστις Χριστοῦ formulation? My proposal is that a genitive noun or pronoun attached to πίστις is an *important means of differentiating* this collective-communal pistis. One of the largest shortcomings of the objective reading of the πίστις Χριστοῦ formulation is that it makes this device of Paul unidentifiable. A basic grammatical evidence made first by George Howard is particularly significant in this context.

Howard assembled from Paul's uses of πίστις all instances followed by a name or a pronoun, apart from the disputed cases where the genitive is Χριστοῦ or its equivalent, and found that in every instance where πίστις is followed by a proper noun or pronoun in the genitive case, the genitive is unmistakably subjective.<sup>22</sup> Howard further extended his survey to the LXX and the literature of Hellenistic Judaism and arrived at the same result.<sup>23</sup> In my view, Paul, by attaching a proper noun or pronoun in the genitive case to the noun πίστις, pointed to a specific element involved in pistis as superindividual, collective-communal reality: Christ/God or humanity.

In the letters considered to be genuinely Pauline, we have many occurrences of subjective genitive construction, with the pronoun ἐμῶν or σου preceding πίστις to refer to the faith of Christians (Rom 1:8, 1 Cor 2:5, 15:14, 17, 2 Cor 1:24, 10:15, Phil 1:25, 2:17, 1 Thes 1:8, 3:2, 5, 6, 7, 10 [cf. Rom 1:12, 1 Thes 1:3]; Philem 5, 6). In these cases, the attached pronoun serves to bring the faith of Christians, who participate in pistis as a party on the believing side, into the focus of attention. Two instances referring to the faith of Abraham

[Rom 4:12, 16] and one referring to the faith of any believer [Rom 4:5] also use this device, although Paul's identification of the faith of Abraham with that of Christians causes a theological problem he was not aware of. In contrast to this, the one instance referring to the faithfulness of God (τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ Rom 3:3) spotlights the nature of God who is on the believed side and also involved in the phenomenon of pistis.

What, then, is to be said about the case of Christ? From Howard's survey on two levels, it is almost indisputable that the genitive case in the controversial πίστις Χριστοῦ formulation refers to Christ's own πίστις. However, does it refer to his faith(fulness) in relation to God, or his faithfulness to us human beings? In other words, does Paul put Christ on the believing (human) side or on the believed (God's) side? Recent πίστις Χριστοῦ debates in the English-speaking world seem to be simply neglecting the latter possibility, but it is worth serious consideration.

In the first place, the interpretation that the genitive case in the πίστις Χριστοῦ formulation refers to Christ's faith(fulness) to God cannot be readily justifiable on the basis of Pauline texts. With Hay we should note the fact that "nowhere does Paul plainly speak of Jesus as believing, trusting, or displaying pistis as 'faithfulness'".<sup>24</sup> Douglas A. Campbell defines the faithfulness of Christ as "his obedience and perseverance to the will of God, culminating in Calvary," and criticizes J. D. G. Dunn as vulgarizing it by suggesting that it speaks of Christ's "belief."<sup>25</sup> However, if at least the concept of Christ's "belief" is contained in the "faithfulness" of Christ as defined by Campbell or other protagonists of the christological reading of πίστις, why should we not expect that there are some verbal equivalents for such an idea in the Pauline corpus? The simple fact that there is no occurrence at all in which Paul or other NT writers referred to Jesus or God as the subject of πιστεύειν should be weighed heavily.

When this fact is juxtaposed with Howard's basic evidence, we have the

<sup>22</sup> G. Howard, "Notes and Observations on the 'Faith of Christ,'" *HTR* 60 (1967), 459-65.

<sup>23</sup> *Idem*, "The 'Faith of Christ,'" *ExpTim* 85 (1974), 212-15.

<sup>24</sup> Hay, *op. cit.*, 474.

<sup>25</sup> Campbell, "Romans 1:17," 280-81, n. 45.



only remaining possibility that the genitive case in the πίστις Χριστοῦ formulation refers to *Christ's faithfulness to humanity*, i.e., in the sense of Christ's being steadfast, truthful, and trustworthy as God's Christ. This concept of πίστις is equivalent to the same term in the phrase πίστις τοῦ θεοῦ (Rom 3:3). By the expression πίστις Χριστοῦ Paul placed Christ on the believed or God's side. Thus we conclude that while πίστις followed by a human name or a pronoun in the Pauline letters refers to the faith of the person(s) in question, πίστις followed by "God" or "Christ" in the genitive case denotes his faithfulness to humanity.

All of the seven occurrences of πίστις Χριστοῦ and similar phrases in Rom 3:22, 26, Gal 2:16, 16, 2:20, 3:22, and Phil 3:9 can be interpreted from this perspective. Paul used this subjective genitive construction to refer specifically to Christ's faithfulness to humanity as one of the few ways of differentiating the collective-communal *pistis*. From this standpoint, it is also difficult to maintain that the πίστις Χριστοῦ formulation has a double meaning of the faith(fulness) of Christ and the faith of humanity.

## VII

Finally, as a text to test the appropriateness of the collective-communal reading of πίστις, let us take up Rom 1:17 where the citation from Hab 2:4 appears for the second time.

Campbell translates Rom 1:17a as follows:

"The eschatological saving righteousness of God is being revealed in the gospel by means of faithfulness (namely, the faithfulness of Christ), with the goal of faith/fulness (in the Christian)."<sup>26</sup>

While his analysis of the grammatical construction of this verse, his criticism of the traditional anthropocentric reading, and his proposal of "cosmic

eschatological perspective" are persuasive, the christological interpretation is not "the final possible reading of the phrase ἐκ πίστεως in v.17a,"<sup>27</sup> This phrase can be read from a collective-communal perspective, and when so read gives a more natural construability.

Every exegete would agree that the three uses of πίστις in 1:17 should be read in the same way as far as possible. Since the christological interpretation does not allow such a reading, Campbell is obliged to divide the phrase ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν into two parts. The result is this paraphrastic rendering, which cannot stand without the parenthetical notes. If we take πίστις in this verse as the superindividual collective-communal *pistis*, however, we get a plain and straight rendering of v. 17:

For the righteousness of God is being revealed in it (the gospel) from *pistis* to *pistis*—as it is written, "The one who is righteous will live by *pistis*."

This interpretation permits dealing with the difficult phrase ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν as a rhetorical expression like "from death to death" (ἐκ θανάτου εἰς θάνατον) and "from life to life" (ἐκ ζωῆς εἰς ζωὴν) in 2 Cor 2:16, "from evil to evil" (ἐκ κακῶν εἰς κακὰ) in Jer 9:2, and "from strength to strength" (ἐκ δυνάμεως εἰς δύνάμιν) in Ps 83:8 (LXX).<sup>28</sup> The combination of ἐκ and εἰς here seems to denote a dynamic character of the *pistis* that involves God/Christ, believers, and the word of proclamation, with ἐκ referring to the basis of revelation of God's righteousness and εἰς as the target of revelation. It implies some sort of progression or growth, but not a growth of faith in individual believers, nor a movement from God/Christ to humanity, but rather a growth of the *pistis* itself in the world. Paul's thought here is not only cosmic-eschatological, but also collective-communal. The phrase ἐκ πίστεως in the Habakkuk quotation can be and should be understood in the same way as in Gal 3:11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. 2 Cor 3:18 (ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν) and 4:17 (καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολήν).

## VIII

Many instances of the absolute use of πίστις in Pauline letters can be construed as a term referring to the superindividual, collective-communal reality of God's grace now revealed. The reality of *pistis* includes, as its essential elements, the faith of humanity who believe, the faithfulness of Christ/God who are believed, and the word of proclamation that creates their relationship. The expressions διὰ τῆς πίστεως and ἐκ πίστεως ("by *pistis*" or "through *pistis*"), in this connection, are considered to be almost sloganized expressions to refer to this reality. This is not to say, however, that the word πίστις always has the same sense throughout the letters of the apostle. On the contrary, particular aspects of *pistis* are emphasized contextually by one method or another. For example, in Gal 1:23 the word of proclamation is brought to the fore. In Gal 3:23 it is the coming and role of Christ rather than humanity or the word that is emphasized. In Gal 6:10 πίστις means almost "Christian movement" but this corporate unity by *pistis* presupposes faith on the part of individual Christians. Metaphorically speaking, just as a triangle having three corners looks different from different angles, so Pauline πίστις that has three elements shows a different aspect according to context.

Related essentially to this is the role of a qualifier in the genitive case. This is an important means of differentiating the reality of *pistis*. Paul expressed the fact or state of faith in believers by attaching a human name or a pronoun in the genitive case to the word πίστις. Primary emphasis is thereby placed on humanity out of the three elements of *pistis*. The subjective genitive in the πίστις Χριστοῦ formulation can be interpreted in the same way, but in this case it is not humanity but the believed Christ that is brought to the fore.